VOLUME

005

Manga: Kirihito Ayamura

Original Work: Nahuse

Character Designer: Gin

Environment Artist: yish

Mechanical Designer: cell

REBUILD WORLD

REBUILD WORLD VOLUME.FIVE

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Tsuki ga Michibiku Isekai Douchuu

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VOLUME

005

003
Chapter 20

037
Chapter 21

071
Chapter 22

105
Chapter 23

139
Chapter 24

174
Extras

The advanced civilization that once dominated the world crumbled to ruins long ago. As ages pass, the survivors have begun piecing together the fragments of its wisdom and glory as they struggle to rebuild their world.

REBUILD WORLD VOLUME.FIVE

Chapter 20

ALPHA, I KNOW I'M HERE TO PRACTICE USING MY SCANNER...

...BUT I CAN STILL GRAB SOME RELICS WHILE I'M AT IT, RIGHT?

GREAT!

I DON'T MIND.

THERE'S NOTHING VALUABLE LEFT IN THIS RUIN, BUT IT WILL MAKE FOR GOOD TRAINING.

HUH?

LOOK, AKIRA! ELENA AND SARA ARE RIGHT OVER THERE.

AKIRA! FANCY MEETING YOU HERE.

WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THIS PICKED-OVER RUIN?

SCREE

VREEE

OH, THAT'S TRUE!

WELL, I FIGURED IT WOULD BE PERFECT FOR SCANNER PRACTICE.

WE'RE HERE FOR TRAINING TOO.

THAT'S OUR JOB AT THE MOMENT.

NOT FOR OURSELVES, THOUGH. WE'LL BE HELPING SOME OTHER PEOPLE.

WE'RE ALMOST THERE.

ブロロロ VRRRRR

YUMINA.

AIRI.

LET'S MAKE THIS COUNT!

YES! IF WE DO WELL TODAY, WE WON'T NEED ANY MORE BABY-SITTERS.

YEAH. WE'LL BE FULL-FLEDGED HUNTERS AFTER THIS.

I REMEM-
BER THAT
GUY...

?!

VREEE

WHAT'S HE DOING WITH ELENA AND SARA?!

WAIT A SEC-HE TOOK ON THAT EMERGENCY JOB ALONE AND SURVIVED?!

THAT'S BECAUSE HIGARAKA DATES FROM A DIFFERENT ERA.

WHAT WE CALL THE "OLD WORLD" LASTED FOR AGES.

HOW DO YOU MEAN?

THIS PLACE FEELS DIFFERENT FROM KUZUSUHARA, EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE BOTH OLD WORLD RUINS.

VREEE

IT'S A CATCH-ALL TERM FOR PAST CIVILIZATIONS.

OLD WORLD HISTORY IS A CYCLE OF COLLAPSE AND RECON-STRUCTION.

WOW...

EVEN YOUR HOMETOWN, KUGAMAYAMA...

...MIGHT BE CALLED THE KUGAMAYAMA CITY ***RUINS*** IN ANOTHER HUNDRED YEARS.

I'LL BRING UP THE MANUAL, SO PUT YOUR READING LESSONS TO WORK.

EASY FOR YOU TO SAY, BUT I HAVEN'T A CLUE HOW TO WORK IT.

FIGURE OUT THE REST YOURSELF.

USE YOUR SCANNER TO EXPLORE THESE RUINS ON YOUR OWN.

NOW, TIME FOR TRAINING!

OKAY!

THERE'RE NO TOUGH MONSTERS HERE, SO I'LL GIVE IT A SHOT!

MONSTER IN THE ALLEY ON YOUR LEFT!

?!

ヴィイイイ
VREEE

THIS MARKER MEANS, UH...

IT'S SHOWING ME A LOT OF STUFF!

TARGET ON THE WALL TO YOUR RIGHT, DIAGONALLY ABOVE YOU!

THEN DEAL WITH THE THREATS BEFORE I TELL YOU TO!

ALPHA! I'M SUPPOSED TO BE DOING THIS MYSELF, REMEMBER?!

!!!

FINE.

GUESS I'VE GOTTA KEEP PRACTICING UNTIL I CAN DO ALL THAT ON MY OWN.

RIDING MY MOTORBIKE, SPOTTING THREATS, AND SHOOTING 'EM.

YOU JUST BARELY MADE IT THAT TIME.

WHAT'S WITH THAT GIANT HOLE?

CLACK カタ CLACK カタ

YES, BUT OUR REPORTS MIGHT NOT BE UP-TO-DATE.

THERE ARE NO GUARANTEES, SO KEEP YOUR GUARD UP!

ALPHA, AREN'T ALL THE MONSTERS HERE SUPPOSED TO BE WIMPY?

I DOUBT YOU'LL FIND ANY VALUABLE RELICS HERE, BUT WE'LL BE EVALUATING YOU ON HOW YOU SEARCH.

WE'D LIKE YOU TO EXPLORE THIS RUIN AS YOU SEE FIT.

NOW, BEGIN!

WE'LL JUDGE YOU AFTER THE EXERCISE.

NONE OF THE MONSTERS HERE POSE MUCH THREAT, BUT LIFE CAN ALWAYS SURPRISE YOU, SO KEEP YOUR GUARD UP.

YEAH. AND I'M GUESSING THAT BIKE'S NOT A RENTAL, ALTHOUGH I CAN'T BE SURE.

THAT WAS A SUR-PRISE.

STILL, I DIDN'T EXPECT TO MEET AKIRA HERE.

AKIRA'S BEEN WORKING HARD TOO, HUH?

I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT.

HE ALSO BOUGHT A SCANNER, SO HE MUST HAVE DONE WELL FOR HIMSELF IN THAT FIGHT FOR THE CITY.

THEN WE'D BETTER NOT SLACK OFF. I WANT TO STAY AHEAD OF HIM A WHILE LONGER!

I'M IMPRESSED! HE'LL SURPASS US IF WE'RE NOT CAREFUL!

OKAY! LET'S CHECK IT OUT!

LOOKS LIKE A HUGE MANSION.

MAYBE WE'LL FIND SOME GOOD RELICS IN HERE.

IT WILL AT LEAST BE GOOD SCANNER PRACTICE.

PROBABLY PICKED CLEAN BY A BAZILLION HUNTERS WHO THOUGHT THE SAME THING YOU DID.

GUESS WE ALL THINK ALIKE.

EVERY ROOM'S EMPTY!

THERE'S NOTHING HERE.

WAIT, AKIRA!

GO INTO THAT ROOM.

ANOTHER EMPTY ROOM.

LET'S HEAD BACK.

PROBABLY TO A BASEMENT.

THERE'S SOME KIND OF SECRET DOOR.

AMAZ-ING.

PRETTY COOL, RIGHT?

THIS? HOW'D YOU FIND IT?!

I USED MY INCREDIBLE PROCESSING POWER TO ANALYZE THE DATA YOUR SCANNER PICKED UP.

カチッ…
Click

カニ-
CLNK
カニ-
CLNK
カニ-
CLNK

LOOKS PITCH DARK IN THERE.

NOTH-
ING.

NOT
THAT
I'VE BEEN
ABLE TO
FIND.

HEY,
MAYBE
THERE'S
ACTUALLY
ANOTHER
SECRET
ROOM?

I CAN'T
HELP THAT.

SORRY.
SOMEONE
MUST HAVE
FOUND IT
AND CLEANED
IT OUT
ALREADY.

カシャッ
ク…

NO, IT PAID OFF!

WHAT'D YOU FIND?!

I THOUGHT I MIGHT SEE SOME LIGHT SHINING THROUGH A CRACK SOMEWHERE.

NO DICE, HUH?

WAIT, THAT WOULDN'T WORK UNDER-GROUND ANYWAY.

THAT MARK IS DRAWN IN CLEAR, LUMINESCENT PAINT...

...BUT YOUR SCANNER BARELY DETECTS IT AT MAX SENSITIVITY.

I'VE HIGH-LIGHTED IT FOR YOU IN AUGMENTED REALITY.

AM I SUPPOSED TO STAND THERE?

FWSH

WELL, WE FOUND IT, SO I MIGHT AS WELL STAND THERE.

STEP

WHAT'S THIS DOING IN A BASE-MENT?

WHAT'S *WHAT* ABOUT?

ALPHA, WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?

NOTHING HAPPENED, HUH?

YOU KNOW, THIS LADY RIGHT IN FRONT OF-

?!

WHAM

ALPHA! WHAT THE HELL?!

TUMBLE

CAN YOU HEAR MY VOICE?!

CAN YOU SEE ME?!

ANY HEAD-ACHE?! NAUSEA?!

ARE YOU THINKING CLEARLY?!

OH, THANK GOOD-NESS.

I...I'M FINE.

LISTEN UP.

YOU MAY HAVE NEARLY DIED JUST NOW!

WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT?

NO, NOT ANY-MORE.

AKIRA, CAN YOU STILL SEE THE PERSON YOU JUST MENTIONED?

I'VE TOLD YOU THAT THE "ME" YOU SEE IS A TYPE OF AR, RIGHT?

THAT WOMAN YOU SAW IS THE SAME.

YEAH, YOU SAID SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

D-DIED? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

WOW! I HAD NO IDEA.

SO?

PEOPLE LIKE *YOU*, AKIRA.

AND PEOPLE CALLED "OLD DOMAIN USERS" CAN DO JUST THAT.

TO PERCEIVE US, YOU NEED TO RECEIVE OUR DATA.

SO, IF YOU RECEIVE *TOO MUCH* DATA...

...YOUR BRAIN WON'T BE ABLE TO PROCESS IT ALL, AND YOU MIGHT DROP DEAD.

WH-WHAT'D HAPPEN THEN?

BUT IF YOU'D BEEN INCOMPATIBLE WITH THAT WOMAN'S TRANSMISSION...

COMPATIBILITY IS A FACTOR, SO SEEING ME WON'T HURT YOU.

...ISN'T THERE ANYTHING YOU CAN DO?

YOU WOULD HAVE *DIED* THE MOMENT YOU SAW HER.

I IO

SNAP

...MAY I, ALPHA, ACT AS A RELAY...

...WITH REGARD TO INCOMING INFORMATION FROM NETWORK SOURCES?

IN ORDER TO PREVENT FATAL DAMAGE TO SUBJECT'S LIFE SUPPORT...

YOU MAY.

CONSENT REGISTERED.

SPECIFIC PROCEDURES COMPRISE, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE—

ARE THERE GONNA BE A LOT OF THINGS LIKE THIS?

YES, BUT DON'T ASK ABOUT THEM.

WHY NOT?

WELL, YOU HAVE A FILTER NOW, SO YOU SHOULD BE REASONABLY SAFE.

WAS THAT MORE OF THE "RED TAPE" YOU TOLD ME ABOUT?

NO THANKS!

I'LL STILL TELL YOU IF YOU REALLY INSIST, OF COURSE.

BECAUSE IT WOULD TAKE A CENTURY TO EXPLAIN IT ALL!

IT'S A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU. WOULD YOU LIKE TO REGISTER AS A NEW USER?

WITH YOUR PERMISSION, I CAN SEE HER TOO.

UMM... CAN YOU HEAR ME?

TMP

...WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT?

CERTAINLY, SIR. THANK YOU FOR USING OUR SERVICES.

トサ Fwsh

NO. BUT I HAVE SOME QUES-TIONS ABOUT-

LET'S SEE IF WE CAN GET HER TO SEND DATA TO YOUR TERMINAL.

IT LOOKS LIKE SHE DISAPPEARS IF YOU TURN HER DOWN.

I'D LIKE YOU TO SEND YOUR DATA TO THIS TERMINAL. CAN YOU DO THAT?

CERTAINLY, SIR. THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN USING OUR SERVICES.

I'LL TAKE ALL POSSIBLE PRECAUTIONS, OF COURSE.

IT'S A BIT RISKY, BUT WE CAN TRY GETTING THE DATA THROUGH YOU.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

UNFORTU-NATELY, IT MUST NOT BE IN A FORMAT YOUR TERMINAL SUPPORTS.

I DON'T SEE ANY INCOMING DATA.

...

...I'LL DO IT.

I'M A HUNTER. DANGER COMES WITH THE JOB.

ALL RIGHT. IF YOU FEEL ANY-THING STRANGE, DON'T HESITATE TO GET OUT OF THERE.

IT'S OVER? I DIDN'T FEEL ANYTHING.

ALL DONE, AKIRA! IT'S SAFE NOW.

SO, WHAT WAS SHE, ANYWAY?

IT'S A LONG STORY. I'LL TELL YOU LATER.

ONCE THE TRANSFER STARTED, I KEPT YOU OUT OF IT AND SWITCHED TO RECEIVING DATA DIRECTLY.

TWO OF THEM ENTER A BUILDING AND SEARCH IT FOR RELICS...

...WHILE ONE STANDS GUARD OUTSIDE.

THE LOOKOUT AND SEARCHERS TRADE OFF AT REGULAR INTERVALS SO THEY DON'T GET TOO STRESSED OR TOO LAX.

IF THEY ENCOUNTER A MONSTER, THEY DROP EVERYTHING AND GROUP UP TO TAKE IT DOWN.

LOOKS LIKE TEXTBOOK RELIC HUNTING TO ME.

WHAT DID YOU EXPECT? ELENA AND SARA WARNED US THIS PLACE WAS PICKED OVER.

I DIDN'T HAVE HIGH HOPES, BUT EVERYTHING WE'VE FOUND IS PRACTICALLY WORTHLESS.

I WISH WE COULD BORROW HIGH-END SCANNERS, LIKE THAT TIME IN KUZUSUHARA.

YEAH, THOSE THINGS COULD EVEN PICK UP OLD DOMAIN AR DATA.

HUH? OH, WELL...

I FIGURE IT JUST LOOKED WEIRD 'CAUSE OF CORRUPT-ED DATA.

YOU KNOW?

SPEAKING OF WHICH, YOU MENTIONED YOU SAW SOMETHING WEIRD IN AR BACK THEN.

WHAT WAS IT?

...

WHAT WAS THAT, ANYWAY?

YUMINA, I THINK WE'RE ABOUT DONE HERE. CALL AIRI FOR ME.

OKAY!

SHE EVEN SPOKE TO ME, ALTHOUGH I COULDN'T HEAR HER.

WAS THAT BECAUSE SHE WAS A GHOST OF THE OLD WORLD?

ONLY I COULD SEE HER.

ANYWAY, I CAN'T TELL YUMINA AND AIRI I SAW A NAKED GIRL!

SHE DIS-APPEARED RIGHT AFTER THAT. STILL, I WONDER.

YEAH, I KNOW, BUT-

COME ON. LET'S GO!

RELAX! IT'S JUST A TRAINING EXERCISE.

THEY PROMISED THE VALUE OF OUR FINDS WON'T COUNT AGAINST US, REMEMBER? SO DON'T WORRY.

SO, HOW MUCH DO YOU THINK WE'LL MAKE ON THIS HAUL?

AVERAGE STRENGTH WILL ONLY WIN ME AN AVERAGE DEATH.

THIS JUST ISN'T ENOUGH.

ORDINARY SUCCESS ISN'T ENOUGH!

I NEED MORE TO HELP MY COMRADES!

TO SAVE EVERYONE!

AT THE TIME, I THOUGHT I IMAGINED IT, BUT NOW I'M SURE.

I'VE GOT IT! THERE WAS SOMETHING THERE.

THINK! THERE MUST BE SOME-THING!

I CAN'T GO HOME LIKE THIS. WHAT'S LEFT? WHAT CAN I DO?

IF I FOCUS MY SCANNER ON THAT AREA AND INCREASE ITS SENSI-TIVITY...

FOUND IT!

!!!

YUMI-NA.

AIRI.

SCAN THAT AREA.

IS THAT A GLUTTONOUS CROCODILE?

WHAT'S IT DOING *HERE?*

I'VE NEVER HEARD OF GLUTTON CROCS IN HIGARAKA.

WAIT!

NICE JOB SPOTTING IT, KATSUYA! LET'S KEEP OUT OF ITS SIGHT.

THIS IS A SHOCK.

WE'RE IN DAN-GER.

YUMINA, AIRI...

...LET'S BAG THAT CROC.

!!!

Chapter 21

YOU WANT TO HUNT A GLUTTON CROC?

KATSUYA, ARE YOU SERIOUS?

MAYBE WE *CAN*, BUT WHY SHOULD YOU TAKE THAT RISK?

IT HASN'T NOTICED US.

IF WE STRIKE FIRST AND STRIKE HARD, WE CAN WIN.

YOU'RE RIGHT. MAYBE I DON'T HAVE WHAT IT TAKES.

WAIT A SEC. I'M GOING TO ASK ELENA.

KAT-SUYA.

SORRY, FORGET IT.

LET'S GO.

ARE YOU SURE?

I GOT HER ON BOARD.

LET'S KILL THAT CROC.

IF YOU WANT TO CALL IT OFF NOW, YOU CAN FOLLOW UP WITH ELENA.

AIRI, SORRY FOR DECIDING THIS WITHOUT YOU, BUT HELP US KILL THAT THING.

I'M IN.

THANKS A MILLION, YUMINA!

GRAB

DASH

GREAT! LET'S MOVE!

OH, GOTCHA.

I LIKE HER PLUCK.

THAT OFFER WAS ALSO A TEST. IF WE'D REFUSED, YUMINA WOULD HAVE KNOWN THEY WERE IN OVER THEIR HEADS.

I WORRY THOSE KIDS WENT AFTER THE CROC BECAUSE THEY TAKE OUR HELP FOR GRANTED.

ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS, ELENA?

"PRETEND"? SO, THEY'RE CLOSE BY?

I ASKED ELENA AND SARA TO BACK US UP BUT TO PRETEND THEY'RE COMING FROM FAR AWAY.

FINE, THEN. I GUESS IT'S NOW OR NEVER.

SO IF THEY STEP IN RIGHT AWAY, THEY THINK WE'RE NOT READY.

THE LONGER THEY WAIT, THE MORE THEY RESPECT US.

IF THIS ONE HAD A TASTE FOR TANKS, WE'D BE IN TROUBLE.

OKAY. I KEEP CHECKING FOR FIREARMS, AND I DON'T SEE ANY.

GLUTTON CROCS TAKE ON TRAITS FROM WHATEVER THEY EAT, YOU KNOW.

FIVE.
FOUR.
THREE.
TWO.
ONE.
USE YOUR BIG-GAME AMMO AND DON'T HOLD BACK!
ZERO!
BAM

KA-TAA

KA-TAA

KA-TAA

KA-TAA

KA-TAA

TA TA TA TA TA TA TA TA

IT'S STILL KICKING! TALK ABOUT TOUGH!

TA TA TA TA

DON'T WORRY! WE CAN BEAT IT!

RAA-AAH!

TATA TATA TA

THUD THUD THUD THUD

THEY'RE STRUGGLING. SHOULD WE HELP?

LET'S GIVE THEM A LITTLE MORE TIME.

FSSHH FSSHH KEK SPLATCH

SPLRT

ミチ

ミチ SPLRT

SHWUMP

KOOM!!

WHAT THE HELL?!

IT HEALS CRAZY FAST.

KUD!

KUD!

THUD THUD THUD THUD THUD

DAMN IT!

CHAK

MAYBE I REALLY CAN'T CUT IT!

IS THIS ALL THERE IS TO ME?

I CAN'T TURN THE TIDE, NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY?

...I WANT THAT KIND OF STRENGTH!

HE WON AND CAME BACK ALL ON HIS OWN.

IF ONLY I COULD DO THAT TOO.

IF ONLY I COULD MAKE A DIFFER-ENCE!

DAMN IT!

I WANT IT!

NO MATTER FROM WHO, NO MATTER HOW...

SHONK

BING

BING

BING

BING

BING

ガシャ

ガシャ

ガシャ

...?

ドドド

WITH GLUTTON CROCS AROUND, WE'D BETTER CALL HIM AND FIND OUT.

HEY, ELENA, DO YOU THINK AKIRA MADE IT HOME OKAY?

BRRRRRRRT

I'M ACTUALLY KIND OF BUSY RIGHT NOW.

OH, SORRY.

HI, THIS IS AKIRA.

IT'S ELENA. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

WELL, CALL ME IF YOU RUN INTO TROUBLE.

REALLY? WE RAN INTO A MONSTER CALLED A GLUTTONOUS CROCODILE...

...SO I JUST WANTED TO WARN YOU IN CASE YOU'RE STILL IN THE RUINS.

THANK YOU. I'LL BE CAREFUL.

BYE.

THMP

THMP

THMP

SLAM

BOOM

THAT'S ITS LAST GUN DOWN.

NOW, AKIRA, LET'S FINISH IT OFF!

THEN YOU'LL HAVE TO TRY THE CWH PROPRIETARY AMMO.

DIDN'T WE BUY THAT FOR EMERGEN-CIES?!

R!/SKID

CAN WE? EVERY TIME I SHOOT ONE HEAD, THE OTHER GROWS BACK. THERE'S NO END IN SIGHT.

VRRR

SWRV

EMER-GENCIES LIKE THIS ONE!

LOAD IT UP, THEN TURN ONTO THAT STREET UP AHEAD.

KTHUD KTHUD KTHUD KTHUD

THUD
THUD
THUD

FIRE!

BLAM

KA-

CHA-

ドゴゴゴ

THAT SPECIAL AMMO PACKS ONE HELL OF A PUNCH!

NO WONDER IT'S SO PRICEY.

I SIGNED YOU UP FOR A GENERIC EXTERMINATION JOB, SO THAT SHOULD COVER PART OF YOUR AMMO BILL.

AND THAT BASEMENT WAS WORTH OUR TIME, SO DON'T LET IT GET TO YOU.

STILL, BETWEEN THAT AND THE AP AMMO, THIS FIGHT MUST HAVE COST ME AN ARM AND A LEG.

NOW, LET'S CALL IT A DAY.

KUGAMAYAMA CITY

DID YOU, NOW?

WELL, I'D SAY I GAVE THEM SOME BROWNIE POINTS WITHOUT EXACTLY GUSHING ABOUT THEM.

HOW'S THAT REPORT COMING, ELENA?

HONEST-LY, I'M OF TWO MINDS.

I KNOW WE'RE KEEPING IT ON HOLD FOR NOW, BUT WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT?

SO, ABOUT THAT RECRUIT-MENT OFFER FROM DRUNCAM.

BUT SOME-THING'S OFF WITH HOW THEY KILLED THAT CROC, EVEN IF THEY DID GET A LUCKY SHOT.

EITHER WAY, I WON'T COMPLAIN.

I HATE TO DUMP THIS ON YOU, SARA, BUT I WANT *YOU* TO CHOOSE.

BUT AT THE COST OF THE FREEDOM WE'RE USED TO?

THEY'LL PROBABLY EVEN CHIP IN ON YOUR NANOMACHINE BILLS.

WE CAN COUNT ON THEIR SUPPORT IF WE SIGN ON.

THANK YOU, ELENA.

SO, WHO WAS THAT LADY IN THE MAID OUTFIT?

IF YOU WANT PROOF, YOU'RE LOOKING AT IT.

MANY JOBS ONLY REQUIRE THE ABILITY TO SEE, HEAR, AND ANSWER QUESTIONS.

YOU GOT ME THERE.

WHAT'S THE POINT OF HIRING SOMEONE WHO'S NOT REALLY THERE?

THAT PLACE WAS BASICALLY A VIRTUAL TEMP AGENCY.

WHY NOT?

AKIRA, FOR YOUR OWN GOOD, DON'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT WHAT YOU SAW IN THAT BASEMENT.

...BECAUSE I THOUGHT YOU'D BE AT LESS RISK OF EXPOSURE IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW.

I NEVER TOLD YOU THAT YOU'RE AN OLD DOMAIN USER...

IF YOU SPILL THE BEANS, THEN AT WORST...

...YOU MIGHT END UP A HUMAN GUINEA PIG, FOLLOWED BY A THOROUGH AUTOPSY TO ANALYZE YOUR BRAIN.

BUT YOU KNOW NOW, AND YOU *MUST* KEEP IT SECRET.

NOW, THAT'S ENOUGH SCARY STUFF. LET'S TALK ABOUT THE FRUITS OF OUR LABOR.

...HONESTLY, I WISH I DIDN'T KNOW THAT.

IT'S EASIER TO HIDE THAN YOU THINK, AS LONG AS YOU KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT. I'LL HELP YOU.

OR MAYBE THIS IS BETTER THAN GETTING CAUGHT WITHOUT KNOWING?

NO, I REALLY JUST WISH I WAS STILL IN THE DARK!

THAT MAID CAME FROM LION'S TAIL, INC.

IT'S AN OLD WORLD COMPANY, BUT SOME OF ITS FACILITIES SEEM TO STILL BE OPERATIONAL.

YOU SEE, LION'S TAIL DID BUSINESS THROUGH A FAR-REACHING NETWORK OF TERMINALS.

I GET IT! WE'LL GO SEARCH THEM FOR RELICS, RIGHT?!

AND I GOT MY HANDS ON THE COORDINATES OF ALL THEIR INSTALLATIONS AND BRANCHES.

SLUMP

!!

SO, I'VE GOTTA WAIT UNTIL I GET A CAR?

NOT SO FAST. YOU CAN'T CARRY THAT MANY RELICS ON YOUR MOTORCYCLE, YOU KNOW?

EXACTLY. IF THEY LEAD US TO AN UNDISCOV-ERED RUIN, WE CAN EXPECT A VERITABLE TREASURE TROVE.

ALL RIGHT! WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?!

WELL, I GUESS I'LL KEEP AT IT. HAVING A GOAL WILL HELP KEEP ME MOTIVATED.

タタタ... RA TA TA

タタタタ... TA TA TA TA

HQ OF DRUNCAM, A HUNTER SYNDICATE

TA TA TA TA TA TA TA TA TA TA

RIGHT ON TARGET!

YES!

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

I'M AT THE TOP OF MY GAME!

HA HA

HA HA

INSIDE A DRUNCAM FACILITY

AFTER REVIEWING YOUR LAST TRAINING EXERCISE, WE'VE DECIDED TO LET YOU WORK WITHOUT A SUPERVISOR.

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU'RE NOW FULL-FLEDGED HUNTERS!

Chapter 22

AND FROM NOW ON, YOU'LL REPORT TO MIZUHA HERE.

I'M MIZUHA. IT'S SO NICE TO MEET YOU!

THAT SHOULD MAKE SHIKARABE LESS CRANKY.

CLAK

ｶﾂﾝ

ｶﾂﾝ

CLAK

ELENA AND SARA MAY HAVE TURNED DOWN OUR RECRUITMENT OFFER...

...BUT AT LEAST THOSE KIDS ARE THE DESK JOCKEYS' PROBLEM NOW.

ﾊﾛｰ

CLICK!

TH-THANK YOU VERY MUCH...

ｷｭｯ

I'M SO IM-PRESSED!

THAT REPORT GAVE YOU SUCH A GLOWING RECOM-MENDA-TION!

THEY'RE ALL SO EXCITING! I CAN'T WAIT TO TELL YOU ABOUT-

NOW THAT YOU'RE MINE, I'LL MAKE SURE YOU HAVE THE BEST OF EVERYTHING!

I'VE EVEN LINED UP MUNICIPAL JOBS FOR YOU!

I WAS HOPING WE COULD MAKE THOSE DECISIONS OURSE-

P-PLEASE, JUST A MOMENT!

...

OF COURSE, OF COURSE! JUST GO OVER THESE WITH ME!

FIRST UP, A JOB HELPING OUT AT THE TEMPORARY BASE THEY'RE BUILDING IN...

SO I'M HELPING BUILD A FORWARD BASE TODAY, HUH?

YOUR JOB IS TO RESCUE ANYONE WHO GETS ATTACKED BY MONSTERS AT THE WORK SITE.

I KNOW, I KNOW.

CLAANG

CLAANG

CLAANG

CLAANG

NOW, LET'S GET GOING. I'VE GOTTA GET MY WORK TERMINAL.

14

...AGAIN?

WELL, WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

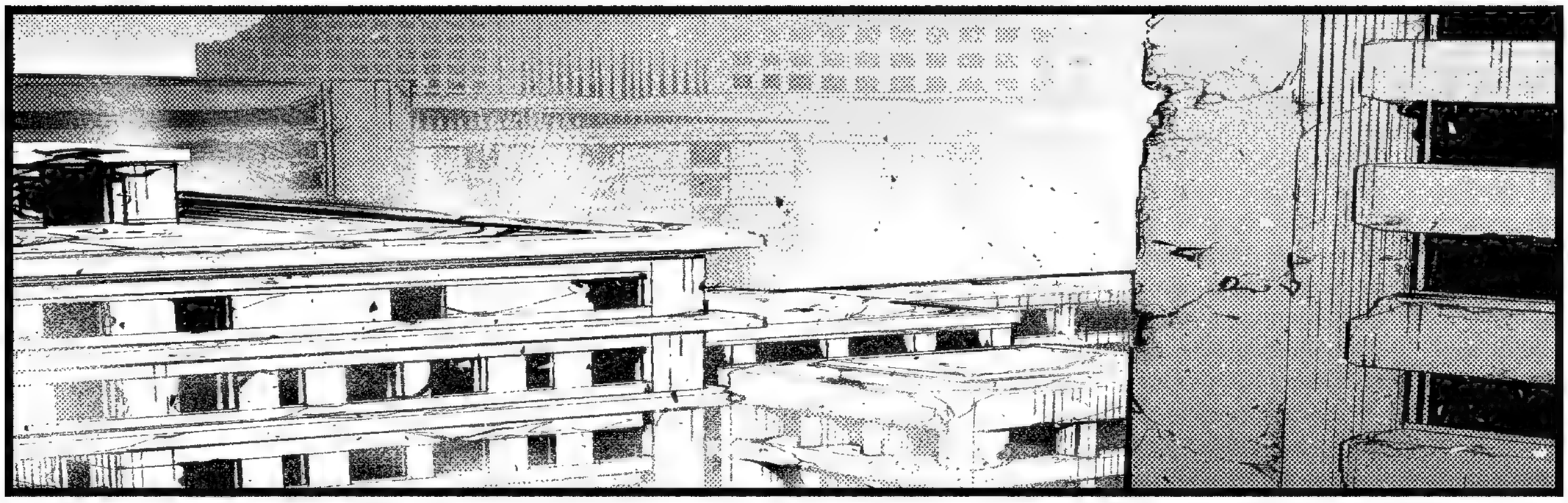
VREEEE

ALREADY?! HOW ARE THERE THIS MANY?!

A NEW DISTRESS CALL JUST CAME IN.

VREEEE

OUR BACKUP'S HERE!



I DON'T FEEL LIKE THESE MEDS ARE DOING MUCH.

ゴクッ GULP

YOU CAN'T EXPECT THOSE CHEAP CAPSULES TO WORK LIKE OLD WORLD MEDICINE.

トス TOSS

REALLY? NO WONDER HUNTERS OVER-DOSE.

YOU'D NEED TO DOWN A HEAP OF THEM TO FEEL THEIR EFFECTS.

HMM... THINK I SHOULD UP THE DOSE?

NOW, LET'S FINISH ONE MORE RESCUE, THEN TAKE A BREAK.

WHOOSH

VRM

VRM

SKID

WHAT'S UP, ALPHA? TOO MUCH RUBBLE TO DRIVE THROUGH?

STOP!

SCREE

WHERE?

NO, TOO MANY MONSTERS.

YARATA SCORPIONS ARE MASTERS OF CAMOU-FLAGE.

RIGHT HERE.

BLAM

HEY! THESE THINGS ARE TOUGH!

YES, THEY'RE QUITE RESILIENT, AND SMART ENOUGH TO PLAY DEAD TOO.

BE SURE TO FINISH THEM OFF BEFORE MOVING ON.

I TOTALLY OVER-LOOKED THEM!

KEEK!

BLAM

KEEK!

BLAM

KABLAM

GOOD THING WE MADE IT IN TIME!

I'M DEAD TIRED...

YEAH!!

WE'RE SAVED!

THIS IS SECTOR A-4 HQ.

NEGATIVE. SEND THE TARGETS BACK ALONE AND PROCEED TO YOUR NEXT MISSION.

FOURTEEN HERE. I RESCUED THE TARGETS.

RETURNING TO BASE NOW.

I'M NOT RUNNING ANOTHER RESCUE WITHOUT A STOP TO RESUPPLY.

NO WAY! I JUST FOUGHT THROUGH A BUILDING FULL OF YARATA SCORPIONS.

COME IN, HQ! WHAT'S THE HOLD-UP?

...

MRMR

YARATA SCORPI-ONS?

BEATS ME. I JUST KNOW THE PLACE WAS CRAWLING WITH 'EM.

PLEASE CONFIRM: IS THAT BUILDING A YARATA SCORPION NEST?

...

I RESCIND MY LAST ORDER!

RETURN TO THE BASE ASAP!

HQ OUT!

AKIRA.

EITHER ABANDON THEM RIGHT NOW...

...OR TELL THEM TO HEAD TO THE BASE AS FAST AS THEY CAN.

?!

YOU HEARD THE MAN. HEAD BACK TO BASE.

OH, COME ON. AT LEAST GUARD US THE WHOLE WAY.

SKTR SKTR SKTR SKTR SKTR SKTR

SKTR SKTR SKTR SKTR SKTR SKTR SKTR SKTR

RUN LIKE HELL!

I'LL TRY AND SLOW 'EM DOWN!

SKTR SKTR SKTR SKTR

SKTR SKTR SKTR SKTR

BLAM

DAMN IT! THIS AP AMMO AIN'T CHEAP!

BLAM

BLAM

BLAM

BLAM

BLAM

BLAM

SHIT!

MORE SCORPIONS CIRCLED AHEAD TO TRAP THEM.

VRM

VRM

WHAT THE HELL?! WHY'D THEY STOP?!

イイイイイ

VREEEE

XXII

SCREECH

YOU'RE OUT OF AMMO. SWITCH RIFLES.

UGH! YOU MEAN THAT WAS MY LAST AP MAG?!

KASHAAA

TA TA TA TA TA TA

KA
TA
TA
TA
SNAP
CRACK
I'LL RUN OUT OF NORMAL AMMO TOO IF THIS KEEPS UP! WHAT THEN?!
KA
TA

YOU'VE GOT TWO CHOICES.

TRY MELEE COMBAT, OR DITCH THESE GUYS AND HEAD FOR THE BASE.

VRRR

WAIT, AKIRA.

YOUR WORRIES ARE OVER!

GUESS I'LL STICK IT OUT AS LONG AS I CAN.

TRA TA TA TA

BACK-UP?!

FX SCREEE

IF YOU NEED A LIFT, HOP ON!

LET'S LEAVE THIS TO HIM AND GET GOING.

GOOD CALL!

TA-YA-YOO!

IT LOOKS LIKE CLEARING OUT THAT PLACE STIRRED UP A HUGE SCORPION NEST.

GLAD YOU MADE IT BACK! I'LL TAKE YOUR TERMINAL.

14

NO THANKS.

I HEAR WE'LL HAVE TO RESECURE THE WHOLE AREA AROUND THE BASE.

HOW'D YOU LIKE TO JOIN IN THE OPERATION?

WELL, THAT'S FINALLY OVER!

YEAH, AND I'M BEAT. LET'S CALL IT A DAY!

カリッ CHOMP

もMUNCH もMUNCH

WANT TO GRAB A BITE WHILE WE'RE HERE?

LOOKS LIKE THEY SET UP FOOD STANDS.

カヤ CHATTER カヤ CHATTER

CRRKWL

980 AURUM FOR A HOT SANDWICH? THAT'S KIND OF PRICEY.

MUST BE WASTE-LAND RATES.

HOT

WEL-COME!

UMM... GIMME ONE OF THOSE.

...NAH. I MEAN, I ALREADY WAITED IN LINE, AND THIS PLACE SEEMS POPULAR.

WOULD YOU RATHER SKIP IT?

CARD? OH, MY HUNTER ID.

COMING RIGHT UP! IF YOU WISH TO PAY BY CARD, PLEASE PLACE IT HERE.

I'M SO GLAD I RAN INTO YOU HERE!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PURCHASE!

SHERYL ?

AKIRA! FANCY MEETING YOU HERE!

WHAT'S SHERYL DOING OUT HERE?

LISTEN, YOU HAVEN'T SOLD ME ANY RELICS SINCE THAT LAST BATCH.

I ONLY AGREED TO HELP SHERYL IN EXCHANGE FOR YOUR FINDS, REMEMBER?

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

I'M JUST FOCUSING ON MONSTER HUNTING RIGHT NOW.

I USED TO HUNT RELICS IN KUZUSU-HARA, AND YOU'VE SEEN WHAT IT'S LIKE NOW.

OH, SO THAT'S IT.

I CAN'T BLAME YOU, BUT DON'T FORGET OUR DEAL.

SO, SHERYL, WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT HERE?

SOUNDS LIKE HE HASN'T DITCHED SHERYL AND TAKEN HIS BUSINESS ELSEWHERE.

GOOD THING, TOO—I'M ONLY INVESTING IN HER SO AKIRA WILL SELL ME RELICS.

SHERYL, I'LL TAKE ANOTHER SANDWICH!

THANKS TO YOU AND MR. KATSURAGI, I'VE HAD THE CHANCE TO WORK ALL SORTS OF JOBS.

COMING RIGHT UP!

I'LL BRING YOU ONE TOO, AKIRA.

DID YOU DO SOME-THING TO HER?

IS IT JUST ME, AKIRA, OR HAS SHERYL CHANGED *A LOT*?

BEATS ME! SHE JUST STARTED ACTING LIKE THAT ONE DAY.

...IT WEIRDS YOU OUT TOO, HUH?

SHE'S NOTHING LIKE WHEN WE FIRST MET.

OF COURSE, SHE MAKES A BETTER BUSINESS PARTNER THIS WAY.

SHE CAN PUT ON THE CHARM FOR CUSTOMERS, AND SHE'S PRETTY SMART TOO.

THE SANDWICH SHOP WAS ***HER*** IDEA, AND THEY'RE SELLING LIKE HOTCAKES.

I DON'T WANT TO GET INTO THE RESTAURANT GAME.

THAT SHOP IS ALL HERS.

YOU MEAN YOU DON'T RUN THAT PLACE?

HERE YOU GO!

ぱくMNCH!

ぱくMNCH!

I'M IM-PRESSED.

SO YOU'RE MAKING AND SELLING THESE, SHERYL?

もくもく CHEW

もくもく CHEW

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

BUT I COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU AND MR. KAT-SURAGI.

DEAD SURE.

ARE YOU *SURE* YOU HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING?

THAT WAS A HELL OF A DAY.

THOSE BUGS— YARATA SCORPIONS? THEY WERE ***TOUGH!***

YES, BUT SOMEDAY YOU'LL NEED TO BE ABLE TO MOW DOWN SMALL FRY LIKE THEM WITH EASE.

ちゃ SPLSH...

WELL... I'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT.

ONE OF THESE DAYS.

Chapter 23

YES, MY **AAH** BARELY SCRATCHED THEM. IT'S A GOOD THING I HAD MY **CWH** ON HAND.

OH MY. YOU RAN INTO ***THAT MANY*** YARATA SCORPI-ONS?

THAT MUST HAVE BEEN AWFUL!

SHIZUKA! COME HERE A SEC!

IN THAT CASE, CONSIDER MODDING YOUR **AAH**.

IT SHOULD BE ABLE TO TAKE DOWN YARATA SCORPIONS IF YOU INSTALL SOME CUSTOM PARTS AND SWITCH TO OVERPRESSURE AMMO.

THUMP

WHAT?! AKIRA'S HERE?!

HEY! DON'T PUSH!

THUMP

WAIT JUST A SECOND, AKIRA.

WAS THAT ELENA?

ELENA IS WEARING A B3-CSD POWERED SUIT.

UNLIKE YOURS, IT DOESN'T USE AN EXOSKEL-ETON FOR SUPPORT.

IT STARTS OUT BAGGY BUT SHRINKS TO FIT WHEN ACTIVATED.

SEE HOW IT CLINGS TO HER SKIN?

HA

DA

AA

AA

AA

IT'S... A LITTLE MUCH. I THINK SHE MIGHT WANT TO WEAR SOMETHING OVER IT.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT, AKIRA?

I...I KNOW, RIGHT?!

S-SEE YOU!

ヒョイッ

ダッ

DART

バタン

SLAM

O-OKAY, SHIZUKA.

WOULD YOU REC-OMMEND ME SOME PARTS?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATRON-AGE!

I'D NORMALLY CONGRAT-ULATE YOU, BUT THIS ONE'S A BIT TRICKY.

I DID?

AKIRA, YOU JUST GOT A PERSONAL JOB OFFER THROUGH THE HUNTER OFFICE.

HELL. NO.

PUT SIMPLY, YOU'D BE EXTERMINAT-ING YARATA SCORPIONS.

TURNING THEM DOWN WILL LAND YOU IN THE CITY'S BAD BOOKS.

THE CLIENT IS THE KUGAMAYAMA DEPARTMENT OF LONG-TERM STRATEGY.

TOO BAD YOU CAN'T REFUSE SO EASILY.

GOOD IDEA! LET'S PILE ON ENOUGH CONDITIONS TO GET YOU REJECTED...

...WITHOUT ANGERING THE CITY.

HMM... WHAT IF WE GIVE THEM CONDITIONS THEY'D NEVER ACCEPT?

SPLSH

OR LET ME RETREAT WHEN-EVER I DECIDE TO?

LIKE DEMANDING THEY PAY FOR ALL THE CWH PROPRIETARY AMMO I CAN FIND UP FRONT?

THE NEXT MORNING

CARTRIDGE FREAK

...YOU'RE KIDDING.

THE CITY APPROVED EVERYTHING WE ASKED FOR.

HOW MANY...? AKIRA, WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING TO FIGHT?!

IF I ASKED FOR ALL THE CWH PROPRIETARY AMMO YOU CAN GET RIGHT NOW...

SHIZUKA.

WELL, I GOT STUCK WITH A YARATA SCORPION EXTERMINATION JOB, AND...

...HOW MANY ROUNDS WOULD THAT BE?

ALL RIGHT. I'LL GET YOU AS MUCH OF YOUR OTHER AMMO AS I CAN TOO.

THANK YOU.

I SEE. IF THEY AGREED TO THOSE CONDITIONS...

...THESE SCORPIONS MUST BE STRONG, NOT TO MENTION NUMEROUS.

WELL THEN, I'M OFF.

ぎゅっ

MAKE SURE YOU COME BACK.

...I WILL.

KUZUSUHARA RUINS
YARATA SCORPION
EXTERMINATION HQ

YOU SIGNED ON FOR THIS SCORPION HUNT, RIGHT?

OVER HERE.

I'LL TAKE WHICH-EVER'S EASIER.

YOU'RE STILL A KID! WELL, WHAT-EVER.

PICK YOUR POISON: SECURITY OR RECON?

YEAH.

ALL YOU'VE GOTTA DO IS STAND LOOKOUT IN AREAS WE'VE ALREADY CLEARED.

HA! FINE THEN. I'LL PUT YOU ON SECU-RITY.

I'M DEAD SERIOUS. I WANT THE EASIEST, SAFEST JOB YOU'VE GOT.

WAS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE FUNNY?

SURE.

YOU'RE ASSIGNED TO CHECK-POINT 14. NOW, MOVE IT.

WHA...

WHAT THE HELL...?

WHAT A SPOILED BRAT. BET HIS RECORD'S NOTHING SPECIAL.

MIGHT AS WELL TAKE A LOOK.

GO ON IN.

カ"KER-
=ヤCHAK
ア ア

FIRST FLOOR

A BASE-MENT?

LOOK AT THESE EXPLOSIVES.

THOSE BOMBS ARE OUR INSUR-ANCE.

WE CAN SET THEM OFF TO TRAP THE SCORPION SWARMS BEFORE THEY HIT THE SURFACE.

IF YOU DO YOUR JOB, YOU'LL BE FAR AWAY BY THEN. OR DEAD.

WHAT'LL HAPPEN TO *US* IF YOU DO THAT?

KUZUSUHARA RUINS
UNDERGROUND
SHOPPING DISTRICT

MAN...

THE RECON TEAM MAKES MAPS AND FINDS NESTS.

THE EXTERMI-NATION TEAM DESTROYS NESTS, EXPANDS THE SAFE ZONE, AND PROVIDES BACKUP.

THE HUNTERS WORKING TO CLEAR OUT THESE SCOR-PIONS OPERATE IN THREE MAIN TEAMS.

RECONNAISSANCE, EXTERMINATION, AND SECURITY.

THE SECURITY TEAM MOSTLY DEFENDS DESIGNATED POINTS.

THIS WORK IS SAFER AND EASIER, SO THEY GIVE IT TO HUNTERS WHO DIDN'T MAKE THE OTHER TWO TEAMS.

I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO TELL YOU THIS, BUT REMEMBER: DON'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN.

SO TODAY REALLY MIGHT BE A CAKEWALK, HUH? GUESS IT NEVER HURTS TO ASK.

I'M GLAD IT SEEMS EASIER THAN I EXPECTED.

THAT'S ALL.

I KNOW, I KNOW.

THIS MUST BE CHECK-POINT 14.

?!

ア"ッ"LEA!

ALPHA!
I SEE ANOTHER WOMAN IN A MAID OUTFIT!

I MOVED BACK, BUT SHE'S STILL THERE!

THAT'S A REAL PERSON STANDING THERE.

WAIT, WHAT?

CALM DOWN. SHE ISN'T AUGMENTED REALITY.

TRUE. I MEAN, THEY EVEN SENT ONE WITH HER OWN *MAID.*

THEY MUST FIGURE THIS PLACE IS SO SAFE KIDS CAN GUARD IT.

ANOTHER BRAT? WHAT'S HQ THINKING?

DON'T WORRY, MISS. I DON'T MIND THE ATTENTION.

SHIORI, MAYBE YOU REALLY *SHOULD* WEAR SOMETHING ELSE.

WELL, *I* DO!

WHAT AN OVER-REACTION.

NOBODY HERE'S IN COMMAND.

IF YOU WANT A BABYSIT-TER, GO JOIN ***THEM.***

ARE YOU IN CHARGE HERE?

CLINK

FAIR ENOUGH.

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

AKIRA.

TMP

TMP

NAH. I'M FINE WHERE I AM.

WHY ARE YOU OFF ON YOUR OWN? COME JOIN US!

YOU'VE JUST BEEN SITTING HERE QUIETLY THE WHOLE TIME!

STOP LYING!

I'M NOT SLACKING OFF, AND I DON'T PLAN TO.

WHY? ARE YOU HOPING TO GET OUT OF WORK-ING?

!

I'VE BEEN RUNNING WIDE-AREA SCANS FOR THREATS.

WHAT'S YOUR HUNTER RANK?

TWENTY.

MINE'S TWENTY-THREE!

NOW, STAND UP AND GO JOIN US OVER THERE!

I OUTRANK YOU, SO DO AS I SAY!

REINA!

WHAT?! THAT'S JUST HOW IT WORKS!

I DON'T HAVE TO LISTEN TO YOU.

NO ONE TOLD ME TO OBEY HIGHER-RANKED HUNTERS.

YOU CAN FORGET ABOUT ME.

JUST LET ME DIE IF YOU HAVE TO.

UMM... HEY.

I KNOW SHE'S PRICKLY, BUT SHE'S JUST WORRIED ABOUT YOU.

COME ON, DON'T BE LIKE THAT.

WHAT?!

YOU'LL BE SAFER WITH A BIG GROUP IF SOME-THING GOES WRONG, YOU KNOW?

WELL, THEY'RE... COLORFUL CHARACTERS, I SUPPOSE.

YOU SAID IT.

HEY, WAIT!

HE CAN DIE ALONE FOR ALL I CARE! LET'S GO, KATSUYA!

FOR-GET HIM!

YANK

...SINCE BEFORE I EVEN GOT HERE.

I BET THEY'VE BEEN SQUAB-BLING...

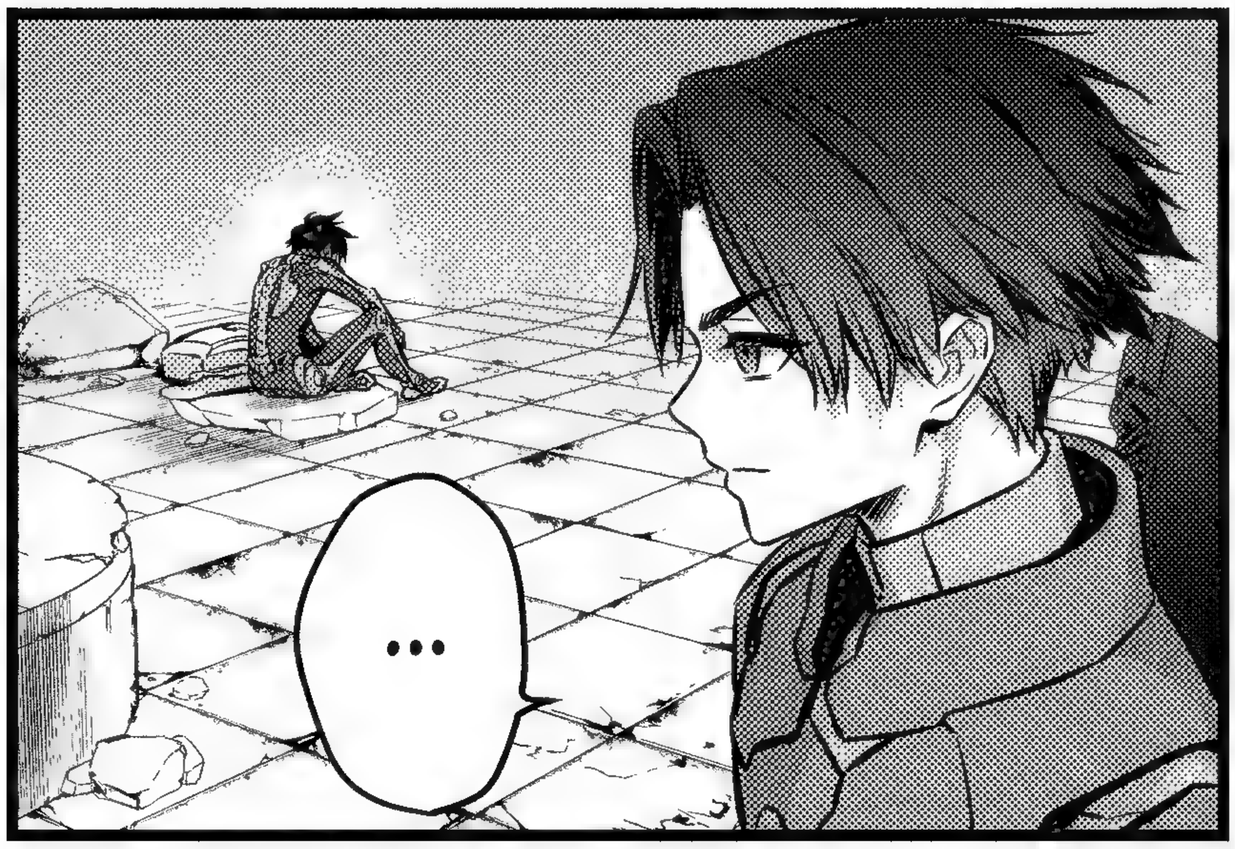
THEY MIGHT BE TROUBLEMAKERS, BUT AKIRA'S PROBABLY THE MOST VICIOUS WHEN PROVOKED.

I'LL NEED TO OBSERVE HIM MORE TO LEARN WHAT DRIVES HIM.

GOOD THING MY CONTRACT LETS ME DECIDE WHEN TO GO IT ALONE OR CUT AND RUN.

THIS ASSIGN-MENT MIGHT NOT BE AS CUSHY AS I THOUGHT.

...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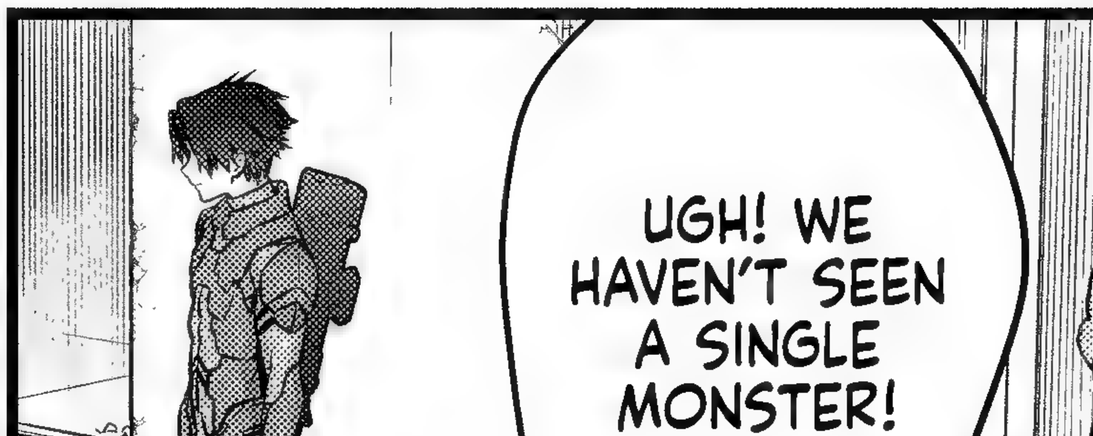
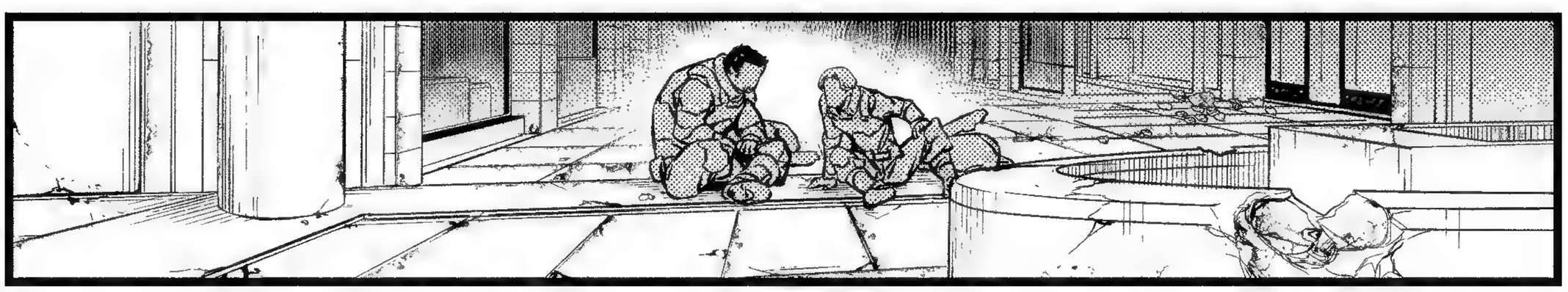

UGH! WE HAVEN'T SEEN A SINGLE MONSTER!

OH, NOTHING.
WHAT IS IT, KATSUYA?



FOR REAL? DAMN! I WISH I WAS ON THE RECON TEAM.
TONS OF RELICS HAVE TURNED UP IN UNEXPLORED PARTS OF THESE TUNNELS.
HEY, HAVE YOU HEARD?

IN THEIR SHOES, I'D HIDE RELICS SOMEWHERE ONLY I COULD FIND 'EM.

SMIRK ニヤァ

SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK THEY DO?

IT'S A BREACH OF CON-TRACT.

YOU'D THINK SO, BUT THOSE GUYS CAN'T JUST WALK AWAY WITH THE RELICS EITHER.

...SOMEONE MIGHT HAVE LEFT A CACHE OF RELICS RIGHT AROUND HERE.

AND THAT MEANS...

HEY! WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?!

JUST RUNNING A QUICK SWEEP OF THE PERI-METER.

WHAT DO *YOU* THINK?

WE'RE HERE TO STAND GUARD, NOT PATROL!

DON'T LEAVE YOUR POST!

STICK TO YOUR DUTY!

DO YOU EVER SHUT UP?

IF YOU'RE GONE TOO LONG, WE'LL CALL HQ TO CHECK ON YOU.

IF YOU NEED A PISS BREAK, MAKE IT QUICK.

IN FACT, I CAN BARELY HOLD IT IN.

YOU'RE QUICK ON THE UPTAKE.

YEAH, I NEED TO TAKE A LEAK.

EXCUSE ME?!

I'VE GOT NO AUTHORITY TO STOP THEM.

IF YOU'VE GOT COMPLAINTS, TAKE THEM UP WITH HQ.

WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?! HOW CAN YOU LET THEM GET AWAY WITH THAT?!

HQ WILL HEAR ABOUT ALL OF THIS!

---!!!

OR DO YOU WANT ME TO SHOVE MY GUN IN THEIR FACES AND THREATEN THEM SO THEY STAY?

DO THAT YOURSELF. I WON'T STOP YOU.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH HQ?! HOW CAN THEY IGNORE GUYS LIKE THAT?!

IN THAT CASE, KATSUYA, WHY DON'T WE PATROL TOO?

OH, FINE!

THIS PLACE IS SO SAFE THEY DON'T CARE IF WE HALF-ASS IT.

GIVE IT UP, REINA.

BUT STILL!

BECAUSE THIS CHECKPOINT WOULD BE AT TOO MUCH RISK IF WE ALSO LEFT.

WHY NOT?! WHY DO WE HAVE TO STAY PUT WHILE THEY DON'T?!

NO.

AND I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU ACTING LIKE THOSE SLACKERS, REINA.

W-WELL, YOU *DID* BEAT ME IN OUR MOCK BATTLE.

AND I PROMISED TO FOLLOW YOUR ORDERS IF I LOST.

SO I'LL PUT UP WITH THIS FOR NOW.

THANKS. I APPRE-CIATE IT.

THIS IS THE WASTE-LAND.

A PLACE OF EXTREME DANGER, FUNDAMEN-TALLY UNLIKE THE WALLED DISTRICTS.

PLEASE UNDERSTAND THAT YOU'RE BEING FATALLY NAIVE.

MISS, I CAN'T APPROVE OF RECK-LESS EX-PEDITIONS EITHER.

F-FINE.

I WANT RESPECT LIKE KATSUYA HAS.

WILL THIS JOB EVER GIVE ME A CHANCE TO PROVE MYSELF?

...

THIS IS HQ. COME IN, CHECKPOINT 14.

BEEP BEEP

NOTHING. COULDN'T BE MORE PEACE-FUL.

ANYTHING UNUSUAL TO REPORT?

THIS IS CHECK-POINT 14.

NEGATIVE. FORM A TEAM TO REINVES-TIGATE THE AREA.

SO, YOU WANT US TO WATCH OUT IN CASE THEY HIT HERE TOO?

CHECKPOINT 15 HAS COME UNDER ATTACK FROM AN AREA WE'D ALREADY DECLARED SAFE.

ROGER THAT. MY BUDDY AND I GOT YOU COVERED.

WE BELIEVE THE SCORPIONS HAVE OPENED A NEW ROUTE.

SERVES YOU RIGHT.

DAMN!

NOT YOU TWO. STAY AT YOUR POSTS.

27 WILL HANDLE IT.

HMPH. WHO ARE YOU GONNA SEND, THEN?

WE'VE ONLY GOT SOME BRATS AND THEIR BABYSITTER.

ROGER THAT.

YOU GUYS CAN SEND HIM ALONE OR CHOOSE UP TO TWO OTHERS YOURSELVES.

!!!

NEGATIVE. GIVEN YOUR COMBAT RECORDS...

...27 IS THE BEST CHOICE.

WHY THAT KID? ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE NOT THINKING OF SOMEBODY ELSE?

THESE ARE OFFICIAL HUNTER OFFICE RECORDS, SO YOU KNOW THEY'RE ACCURATE.

WHAT'D THAT BRAT– WHAT DID 27 DO THAT'S SO IMPRESSIVE?

EIGHTY OR MORE ON HIS *OWN*?!

HE RESCUED HUNTERS FROM AN INFESTED BUILDING...

...AND KILLED AT LEAST EIGHTY YARATA SCORPIONS IN THE PROCESS.

ALONE.

WHO CARES ABOUT SOME DAMN CROC?!

27'S KILLED ONE TOO! SOLO!

KATSUYA-52- HAS RESCUED A LOT OF HUNTERS TOO.

WITH HIS TRACK RECORD, HE SHOULD BE JUST AS GOOD A CHOICE.

HE EVEN BAGGED A GLUTTON CROC.

THAT'S RIGHT! KATSUYA'S TEAM KILLED A GLUT-TONOUS CROCODILE!

...

HQ OUT!

STOP NITPICKING YOUR ORDERS! NO MORE QUESTIONS!

STILL, THIS MUST BE MY CHANCE!

I'VE NEVER SEEN KATSUYA LOOK LIKE THIS BEFORE.

WHO IS THIS AKIRA BOY?

WAIT, MISS!

SHIORI, WE'RE GOING AFTER HIM!

Chapter 24

SO HOW SHOULD WE DO THIS? SHOULD I JUST WALK TOWARD CHECKPOINT 15?

WHAT MAKES YOU SUGGEST THAT?

LET ME THINK... IF I RUN INTO A SWARM ON MY WAY...

...I CAN ESCAPE TO CHECKPOINT 15, I GUESS?

ANY SCORPIONS RUNNING AWAY FROM THERE MIGHT'VE LEFT A BLOOD TRAIL ON THE WAY BACK TO THEIR NEST.

NOT BAD. ANY OTHER REASON?

RIGHT ON THE MONEY. ***ESPECIALLY*** THAT SECOND REASON.

WHO'D TRUST THAT GROUP OVER ONE THAT ALREADY FOUGHT OFF AN ATTACK?

NO ONE WAS ALERT, AND THE PERSONNEL WERE ALREADY FIGHTING AMONG THEMSELVES.

YOU SAID IT.

YOU DON'T THINK CHECK-POINT 14'S TOO SAFE EITHER, HUH?

HUH? FOR YOU TOO?

PROCEED WITHOUT MY SUPPORT—IT WILL BE GOOD TRAINING FOR BOTH OF US.

NOW, SHALL WE GET GOING?

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, MY SCOUTING ABILITIES HAVE TAKEN A BIG HIT HERE.

...HOW BIG A HIT ARE WE TALKING?

THAT'S CONFIDENTIAL, BUT LET'S JUST SAY IT'S A REAL DOOZY.

WH-WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I CAN'T DETECT THREATS AS WELL BENEATH KUZUSUHARA AS I CAN ON THE SURFACE.

WE HAVE COMPANY.

...OKAY. LET'S GO.

AKIRA, WAIT.

NOT *THOSE* TWO...

WE'RE COMING WITH YOU.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

NO THANKS. GET LOST.

トン トン トン トン

WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO MAKE YOU LEAVE?

SHOVE A GUN IN YOUR FACE?

...

IF YOU DID SO, I WOULD DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO RESIST.

AS THAT WOULD RESULT IN UNNECESSARY HARM TO BOTH OF US, I DO NOT RECOMMEND IT.

PLEASE RECON-SIDER.

WHY NOT DROP IT AND JUST TRY TO IGNORE THEM?

ANY MORE ARGUING WILL ONLY MAKE THINGS WORSE.

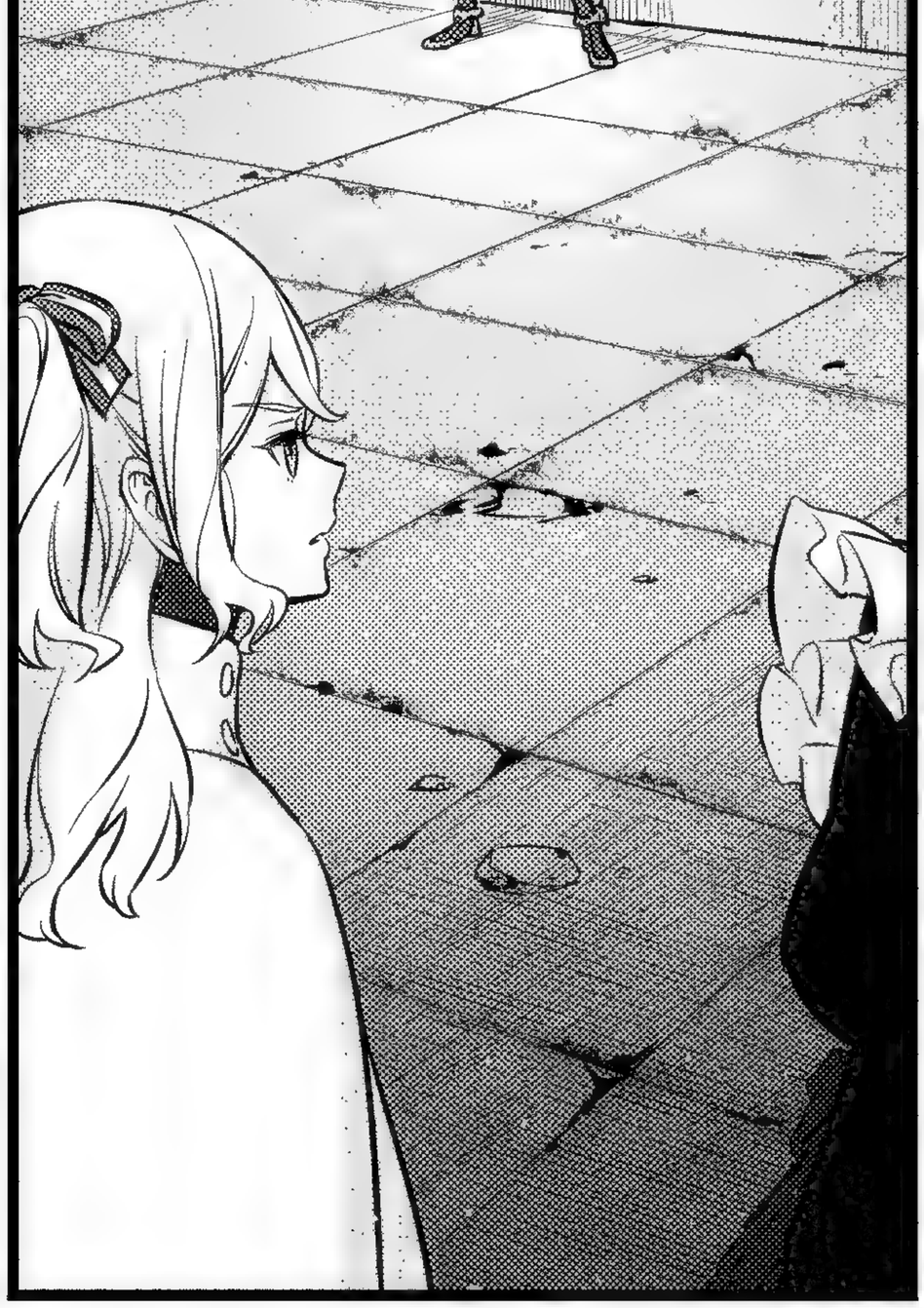
SIGH

YEAH? THEN DRAG *HER* BACK TO THE CHECKPOINT AND SAVE US BOTH A HEADACHE.

AS MY DUTY INCLUDES RESPECTING MISS REINA'S WISHES, I MUST DECLINE.

HE MUST BE THE CAUTIOUS TYPE.

WHY IS HE MOVING SO SLOWLY?



NOT THREE. ONE.

MAYBE, BUT THAT DOESN'T EXPLAIN THIS SNAIL'S PACE. I MEAN, THERE ARE ***THREE*** OF US.

YOU MEAN HE DOESN'T THINK WE CAN PULL OUR WEIGHT AT ***ALL?***

HE ISN'T COUNTING ON US FOR ANYTHING.

IN THAT CASE, I'LL HAVE TO CONVINCE THE BOY.

MISS REINA IS BEING STUBBORN.

I DOUBT YOU'LL GAIN ANYTHING FROM CONTINUING TO ACCOMPANY HIM.

SHALL WE TURN BACK AFTER ALL, MISS?

HMM...

NO!

IGNORE HER. IGNORE-

MR. AKIRA, I WISH TO SPEAK WITH YOU. PLEASE LISTEN.

NO SIGNS OF YARATA SCORPIONS THAT I CAN SEE.

MAYBE THEY'RE FARTHER ON?

I WISH TO EMPLOY YOU AS MISS REINA'S BODYGUARD.

WHAT?

...PROVIDED THAT YOU ARE SUFFICIENTLY NEARBY TO ASSIST HER.

YOU WILL PROTECT HER FOR THE DURATION OF THIS SCORPION EXTERMINATION...

I'M HIRING ADDITIONAL PROTECTION FOR YOU, MISS.

H-HANG ON! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!

I WILL PAY YOU FIVE MILLION AURUM UPON SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION.

B-BUT...!

...I MUST TAKE OTHER STEPS TO ENSURE YOUR SAFETY.

SINCE YOU REFUSE TO TURN BACK...

AKIRA, YOU'D BETTER SPEAK UP OR THEY'LL DECIDE YOUR ANSWER WITHOUT YOU.

THAT'S NOT IT.

I'M NOT SKILLED ENOUGH TO EARN THAT PAY.

I CAN'T HANDLE GUARDING SOMEONE ELSE.

WAIT! I'M NOT TAKING THAT JOB.

IF THE PAY DOES NOT SATISFY YOU, I AM WILLING TO NEGOTIATE.

BUT YOU SAVED SOME HUNTERS FROM A YARATA SCORPION SWARM SOLO, DIDN'T YOU?

YEAH, BUT IT WASN'T EASY. I BURNED THROUGH ALL MY AMMO AND STILL ONLY SURVIVED BY THE SKIN OF MY TEETH.

I WOULD HAVE SAID NO IF I COULD! BUT MY CLIENT'S THE KUGAMAYAMA DLS!

HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO TURN *THEM* DOWN?!

IF THAT WAS SO HARD, WHY'D YOU TAKE THIS EXTERMINATION JOB?

...O-OH.

'COURSE NOT.

SO, YOU'RE NOT ACTUALLY ALL THAT STRONG?

IN THAT CASE, I WILL REVISE MY OFFER.

I WILL PAY YOU 100,000 AURUM IN ADVANCE. IS THAT ACCEPTABLE?

PLEASE SUPPORT MISS REINA UNTIL WE RETURN TO THE CHECK-POINT.

SHIORI?

I MEAN, HQ ASKED FOR HIM SPECIFICALLY, AND KATSUYA SEEMED REALLY IMPRESSED WITH HIM.

AND HERE I FIGURED HE WAS SOME-THING SPECIAL.

WHAT A LETDOWN.

IF I GO BACK NOW, I'LL LOOK LIKE A COMPLETE FOOL.

...

NO, BUT...

IF YOU'LL LISTEN TO ME AND LEAVE, MISS, I'LL RESCIND MY OFFER.

BUT YOU WON'T, WILL YOU?

ALL RIGHT. I'LL TAKE THE JOB. NAME'S AKIRA.

WHY NOT ACCEPT? SAYING NO WILL JUST START ANOTHER ARGUMENT.

IF YOU ASK ME, THIS JOB IS BASICALLY AN EXCUSE TO AVOID CONFLICT WHILE THEY'RE WITH YOU.

I AM SHIORI. HERE IS YOUR PAYMENT.

...FINE. I GUESS YOU'VE GOT A POINT.

I'M GETTING PAID TO SUPPORT YOU, SO I'LL GO ALONG WITH YOUR PLAN.

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO NOW?

SO, WHAT'S OUR NEXT MOVE?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

WAIT A SECOND! I DON'T HAVE A PLAN!

UMM...

SURE THING.

Y-YEAH! LET'S DO THAT!

I SEE NO ISSUE WITH CONTINUING TO FOLLOW YOUR SEARCH PLAN FOR THE TIME BEING.

L'STAARE

HE REALLY DOESN'T **LOOK** STRONG, THOUGH.

HMM... I THOUGHT I'D OVERES-TIMATED HIM EARLIER...

...BUT IF HE'S ACTUALLY A WEAKLING, HOW COULD HE KILL A GLUTTON CROC ALONE?

OH, SORRY!

IT'S NOTH-ING.

DOES SOMETHING CONCERN YOU, MISS REINA?

BUT IN THAT CASE...

BUT SHE MIGHT PROVOKE ANOTHER DISPUTE IF SHE KEEPS STARING AT HIM. THIS WON'T DO.

SHE DOESN'T REALIZE IT, BUT SHE'S JUST HOPING TO USE HIM AS A BENCHMARK FOR HERSELF.

MISS REINA SEEMS QUITE FIXATED ON HIS COMPETENCY, BUT IT'S REALLY HER OWN THAT CONCERNS HER.

WHY ASK *ME* THAT?

WHAT IS YOUR OPINION OF MISS REINA'S SKILL?

MR. AKIRA.

WELL...

I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT TO TELL YOU.

I'D LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPOR-TUNITY TO HEAR AN OUTSIDE OPINION.

PLEASE CON-SIDER THIS ASSESSMENT AN ASPECT OF SUPPORTING MISS REINA.

HE COULD ALSO STAND TO PRACTICE NEGOTIATING AMICABLY. WELL, I'M SURE HE'LL MANAGE.

TREAT IT AS TRAINING AND THINK FOR YOURSELF.

ALPHA?

A HUNTER NEEDS TO BE ABLE TO GAUGE SOMEONE'S COMPETENCE AT FIRST SIGHT.

STAAARE

HOW MUCH WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO PAY HER?

I SEE YOUR POINT. WELL THEN, SUPPOSE YOU HIRED MISS REINA TO JOIN YOU ON A HUNT.

"SKILL" IS TOO VAGUE.

COULD YOU GIVE ME A FRAME OF REFERENCE?

OH, THAT'S EASY.

I JUST WOULDN'T HIRE HER.

MR. AKIRA, I MUST QUESTION YOUR JUDGMENT.

KINDLY REVISE YOUR ANSWER OR JUSTIFY IT TO MY SATISFAC-TION.

IS THAT HOW LITTLE HE THINKS OF ME?!

HE WOULDN'T EVEN WORK WITH ME FOR FREE?!

SHE'S JUST A HUGE PAIN IN THE ASS.

I...I CAN'T PRETEND I'M *THAT* STRONG, BUT—

...FIFTY YARATA SCORPIONS AND EVERY-ONE ELSE AT CHECKPOINT 14 WITHOUT BREAKING A SWEAT.

I'LL TAKE IT BACK IF YOU COULD REALISTICAL-LY KILL... LET'S SEE...

WHAT ELSE WAS I SUPPOSED TO DO?!

JUST ROLL OVER AND LET THEM INSULT US?!

YOU PICKED A FIGHT WITH THOSE TWO GUYS BACK THERE. HOW FAR DID YOU THINK THAT THROUGH?

WHY WERE YOU THAT AGGRESSIVE? WERE YOU SURE YOU COULD TAKE THEM IF THINGS GOT VIOLENT?

NAH. DO WHATEVER YOU FEEL LIKE...

...AS LONG AS YOU CAN PREDICT WHAT'LL HAPPEN AND DEAL WITH THE FALLOUT.

SO, HOW EXACTLY DID YOU FIGURE THAT STUNT WAS GONNA PLAY OUT?

BA-

DUMP

LET PEOPLE WALK OVER YOU, AND YOU MIGHT DIE.

SOMETIMES YOU GOTTA PULL A GUN. SHOWS YOU MEAN BUSINESS.

THAT SOUNDS FINE TO ME— *IF* YOU'RE READY TO SHED SOME BLOOD AFTERWARD.

YEAH, SHE COULD COUNT ON YOU TO SETTLE THINGS. THAT'S A DECENT PLAN IN MY BOOK.

MY BAD. I THOUGHT YOU WERE ASKING ABOUT JUST *HER*, NOT BOTH OF YOU.

FORGET WHAT I SAID.

MR. AKIRA, IF THE SITUATION HAD DETERIO-RATED TO THAT POINT, I WOULD HAVE DONE MY UTMOST TO RESTORE ORDER.

THUS, I FIND YOUR SCENARIO RATHER IMPROBABLE.

AND HOW IS THE ABILITY TO KILL FIFTY SCORPIONS AND ALL THE OTHER HUNTERS RELEVANT?

JUST AN ESTIMATE. I FIGURED IF SHE COULD DO THAT, SHE COULD HOLD THE CHECKPOINT ALONE NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENED.

YOU BET.

SURELY THAT'S QUITE AN EXTREME POSITION?

I WOULDN'T DIP INTO MY OWN POCKETS TO HIRE SOMEONE WHO PICKS FIGHTS THEY DON'T HAVE TO.

END OF STORY.

MOST PEOPLE DON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THAT KIND OF WORST-CASE SCENARIO.

BUT I'M THINKING OF *ME.*

IF YOU DON'T AGREE, FORGET ABOUT IT. IT'S JUST A DUMB KID'S DUMB OPINION.

I'M NOT SAYING I KNOW BEST OR ANY-THING.

...VERY WELL.

I'VE HEARD YOUR REASONS, ALTHOUGH I DON'T NECESSARILY ACCEPT THEM.

NOW, PLEASE TELL ME ONE LAST THING.

YOU TOLD ME ANSWERING WAS PART OF MY JOB.

I TOOK YOUR MONEY, SO I FIGURED I OUGHTA BE HONEST, EVEN IF IT PISSED YOU OFF.

YES, HE IS.

DID YOU CONSIDER HOW MUCH YOUR ANSWERS WOULD UPSET *ME*?

IS HE PREPARED TO FIGHT ME TO THE DEATH?

C-CAN HE BE...

...SERIOUS?!

SHIORI...

STOP.

THAT'S ENOUGH. JUST STOP.

M-MISS...

PLEASE.

SIGH

YOU DON'T HAVE TO TRY SO HARD TO SURPRISE ME, YOU KNOW?

...BUT NOT EVEN *MY* PROCESSING POWER COULD PREDICT THAT OUTCOME.

I KNOW I TOLD YOU TO THINK FOR YOUR-SELF...

I...I DIDN'T START THAT FIGHT.

...S-SORRY.

...

IT'S TOO LATE NOW, BUT WAS MAKING THEM HAPPY PART OF THE JOB?

SHOULD I HAVE JUST TOLD A LITTLE WHITE LIE?

YES, IF AVOIDING CONFLICT WAS YOUR TOP PRIORITY.

WHAT'S THAT?

AS ONE OF YOUR CLIENTS, I APPROVE OF YOUR STANCE.

BUT COMMITMENT TO DOING YOUR JOB WELL IS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT.

70.7 70.000 7K

A DEAD YARATA SCORPION.

SURE IT'S NOT FAKING?

IS IT FROM THE SWARM THAT ATTACKED CHECK-POINT 15?

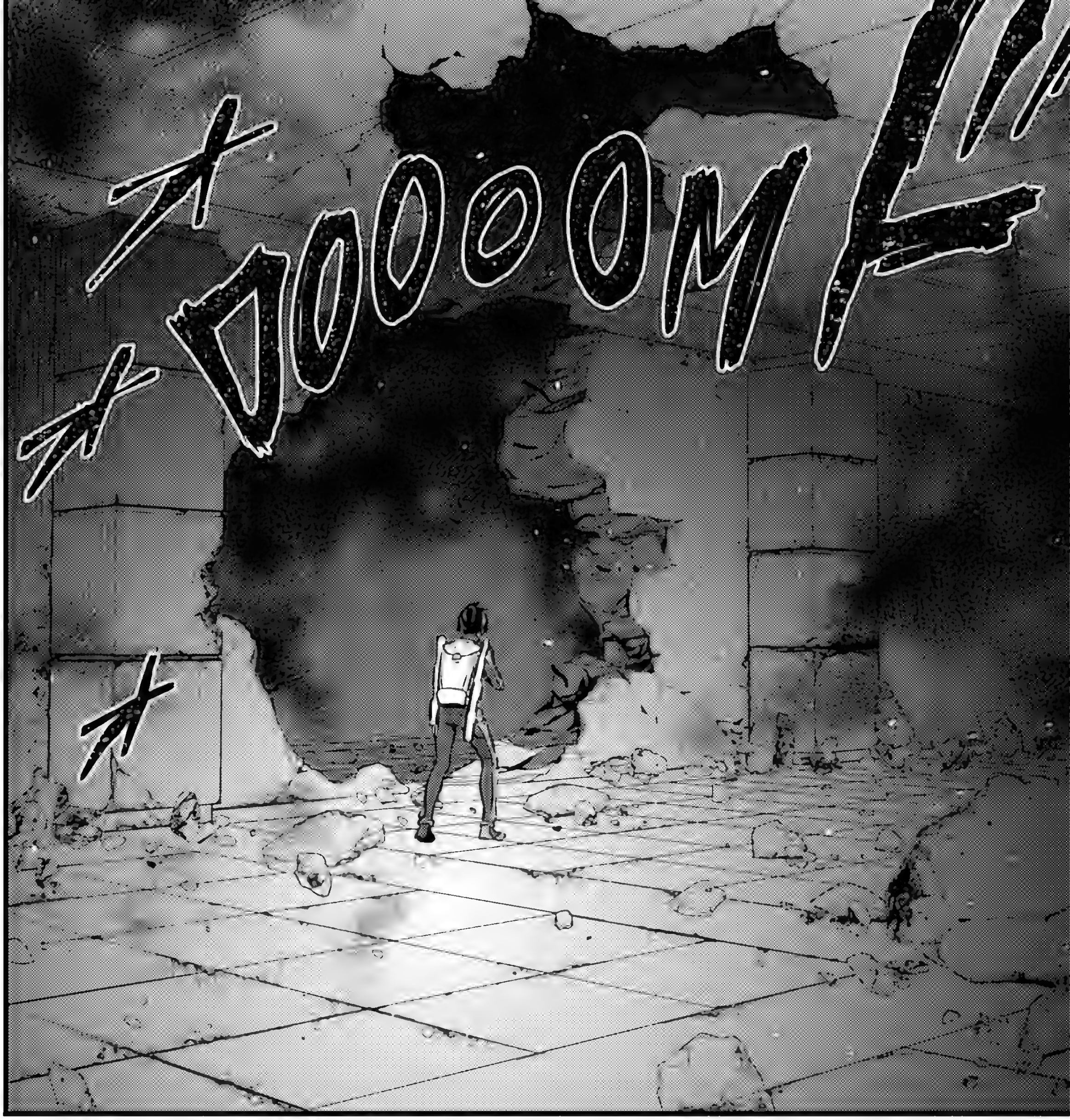
IT'S WAY BIGGER THAN THE ONES I FOUGHT ABOVE GROUND!

AKIRA, A LARGE SWARM OF SCORPIONS PASSED THAT WAY.

IF OTHERS LEFT A TRAIL, WE COULD FOLLOW IT TO THEIR NEST.

MY SENSORS DON'T SHOW ANYTHING THIS WAY.

HE'S TURNING AWAY FROM CHECK-POINT 15?


KABOOM!!

To Be Continued in Volume 6

REBUILD WORLD

A NEW BUSINESS VENTURE

...AND USED THE MILLION AURUM FROM SELLING PART OF OUR TURF AS SEED MONEY.

I ASKED FOR KATSURAGI'S HELP WITH MY WINNING BUSINESS PLAN...

AT LAST, TODAY IS THE DAY!

I'M READY TO GO!

AND I GOT A BUNCH OF SUPPLIERS ON BOARD WITHOUT GIVING AWAY I'M FROM THE SLUMS.

AKIRA SPENT A MILLION AURUM TO SETTLE WITH SHIJIMA.

NOW, I'LL PAY HIM BACK WITH INTEREST!

Hot Sandwich

OPERATION HOT SANDWICH STAND IS GO!

THE SCENT OF SOAP

TEE HEE! THE BOSS TOLD ME TO USE SOME FANCY SOAP.

AND IT REVIVES HAIR AND SKIN! I HARDLY RECOGNIZE MYSELF!

YOU SMELL NICE, ARICIA.

THANKS!

STILL, I WONDER WHY THE BOSS WANTS US LOOKING OUR BEST.

Y-YOU *DO* LOOK PRETTY.

?!

ガバッ ZIP

YOU CLEANED UP NICELY.

WHAAAT ?!

ヴォォォ VRMM

TO THE WASTE-LAND!

NOW, LET'S MOVE!

WE'LL SELL THEM HOT SAND-WICHES!

WHILE THEY'RE BUILDING THE BASE HERE, THIS IS THE BEST PLACE TO SNAG CUSTOM-ERS!

WE'LL *MAKE* THEM SELL

いらっしゃいませ～ Welcome!

SHOW ME THOSE SMILES!

SEE WHY I MADE YOU CLEAN UP?

HOLD UP! SANDWICHES WON'T SELL FOR THAT MUCH! NOT EVEN IN THE WASTELAND!

₹980

WE'RE SETTING OUR PRICES HIGH AT 980 AURUM!

YES, BOSS!

ドドド

A HUNGRY WOLF

I KNOW YOU CAN DO IT.

ERIO...

GRRRWLぐ〜るるるる

I'M SKIPPING MEALS. IT'S MY DUTY.

NOW, ERIO!

ゴクッ

TEMPORARY BASE: MOBILE STORE PLAZA

DEVOUR THAT SANDWICH!

CHEW CHEW

MUNCH! MUNCH!

OPERATION SHILL WAS A HUGE SUCCESS!

AND ME!

GIMME ONE TOO!

Stock

THAT TASTED GREAT !!!

Kink

LOVE
I STARTED WRITING ON THE SAND-WICHES IN SAUCE.
CUS-TOMERS LOVE IT!
Ultimate Weapon
Big Score
IT TAKES SKILL TO SPOT JUST WHAT EACH CUSTOMER WILL LIKE!
THANK YOU FOR YOUR PURCHASE!
IS IT ME, OR IS THIS GETTING WEIRD?
You Rigo

Things Best Unseen

YOU MADE ONE AND A HALF MIL, SHERYL? THAT'S AMAZING!
SANDWICH SALES WILL REACH MY GOAL SOON. I HOPE AKIRA IS PLEASED.
HUG
YOU OVERCAME SO MANY OBSTACLES TO DO THIS FOR ME.
I'M SO GLAD I HELPED YOU.
...
...NO.
OH, NO, I COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU.
...OH, I COULDN'T.
WHO IS THE BOSS TALKING TO?
HEE HEE HEE...
HUUG
...WELL THEN, MOVE IN WITH ME. I HAVE PLENTY OF ROOM.

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